

June 5 THE TRIAL /
OF CT

WILLIAM WELDON,
AND
RICHARD WELDON,
alias DODSON,

BEFORE

BARON THOMPSON,
At OAKHAM,

On SATURDAY, the 14th of MARCH, 1789,

FOR THE MURDER OF

Mr. JOHN FREEMAN. of *Edith Weston*;

(As TAKEN BY A GENTLEMAN IN COURT)

WITH

THEIR CONFESSIONS,

AND AN ACCOUNT OF

The MURDER of Mr. LUMLEY,
GOALER, at OAKHAM.

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NAMES OF THE JURORS.

John Maydwell, of *Oakham*, farmer.

Francis Croden, of the same, grazier

Jacob Gray, of the same, fadler.

Wright Webb, of the same, barber.

Henry Duxbury, of the same, hatter.

John Brown, of the same, farmer.

Thomas Sewell, of the same, miller.

John Pullen, of the same, baker.

Thomas Rudkin, of *Barleythorpe*, farmer.

Samuel Adcock, of the same, farmer.

Joseph Cant, of *Uppingham*, grazier.

George Hart, of the same, victualler.

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THE TRIAL, &c.

R.S. **T**HE JURY being sworn, the indictment was read over, charging WILLIAM WELDON, and RICHARD WELDON, alias DODSON, with the wilful murder of JOHN FREEMAN, of *Edith-Weston*, in the County of Rutland, on the 15th of November, 1788.

William Weldon pleaded, Not guilty.

Richard Weldon pleaded, Guilty; and it was some time before the judge's advice to put himself on his trial, could prevail on him to alter his plea, saying he "wished to speak the truth." At length he pleaded, Not guilty.

Mr. NEWNHAM (king's counsel) for the prosecution, then addressed the jury in a long speech, giving a detail of the evidence he had to produce against the prisoners, which he doubted not would prove fully satisfactory to them to find the prisoners guilty. He, however, most earnestly recommended to them not to pay the least attention to Richard Weldon's having pleaded guilty, but if possible to erase it from their minds, and give a verdict only according to the evidence which they were going to hear. He concluded his address in a very pathetic manner, so as to draw tears from many in court, particularly the learned judge.

THOMAS NEEDHAM, a Youth, sworn.

(Son of Joseph Needham, of *Hambleton*.)

He was at Weldon's father's house, at *Hambleton*, at six o'clock in the evening of the 15th of November last; his father (Joseph Needham) was also there, and the prisoner Wm. Weldon. A message came by Needham's girl for him to go home, who said a person wanted to reckon with him. He went immediately. When he was gone, the witness said in Weldon's presence, he expected Mr. Freeman was come to reckon with his father. Weldon went

out of the house in about five minutes. His father (Needham) returned to old Weldon's in about half an hour, and staid there much the same time. Witness saw no more of Wm. Weldon that night.

ROBERT PETTIFER. sworn.

Lives at *Eglinton*; was thatching at *Hambleton* on Saturday Nov. 15. On his return home met Wm. Weldon about half past five o' clock in the evening, in pudding-bag lane, by Mr. Needham's wall, half way between old Weldon's house and Mr. Needham's barn. Weldon asked him how he was? Witness replied, how are you, Will? and said it had been a very cold day. Weldon said he was cold by sitting by the fire. They bade each other good night, and Weldon went towards a stile in a close near. Witness mentioned this circumstance to 'squire Barker of *London*: his reason for which was, that Weldon had been taken up for the murder, and let go again, on the plea that he had not been out of his father's house on the evening of Saturday. One Hill was in company with witness at the time he met Weldon, about forty yards from prisoner's father's house.

JOSEPH NEEDHAM. sworn.

Lives at *Hambleton*; was at old Weldon's the 15th of November, about five o' clock in the evening. His girl came for him after he had been there a quarter of an hour, and spoke aloud that he was wanted, but did not say what for. Did not see W. Weldon at the time. He went immediately towards home. Mr. Freeman, the deceased, was the person who wanted him, and they went to his house together. Mr. Freeman wanted to balance with him, which he did; Freeman staid at his house near an hour, and received from him 3l. 4s. 10d. viz. 3 guineas in gold, 1s. 6d. in silver, and 4d. in half-pence. Does not know the way Mr. Freeman went afterwards. Witness returned to old Weldon's, and staid there half an hour but did not see Wm. Weldon that night; believes, is not sure, that his (the witness's) son was there. Witness took bread from Freeman, who used to come twice or thrice a week to *HAMBLETON*; and believes Wm. Weldon knew

the deceased better than Rich. having been more at home.

NICHOLAS NEEDHAM. sworn.

Is a publican at *Hambleton*, knows both the prisoners. William came to his house on Sunday morning the 16th of November, about eight o' clock, and asked for 3d. worth of gin, which he took home in a cream jug; in about ten minutes after, he came for another glass, which he drank; and holding the glass in his hand, asked for another. Witness noticed his hand to shake a good deal. Weldon said he was not well, and did not know what ailed him; said to witness, "Master, I owe you some money, I will pay it before I go to my place on Saturday;" witness had not asked him for the money. Witness had heard of Mr. Freeman being missing, his man having come to witness's house to enquire after him. Between nine and ten the witness and another man went to seek for Freeman; the body was found near Chelfelden's close, and several persons were there when witness came up to the body.

JOHN PAWLET, sworn.

Is a carpenter, lives at *Hambleton*. Wm. Weldon came to his house on Sunday morning 16th November, about 9 o' clock, and asked for a dish of tea, which he drank, and seemed in a totter. He drank a second dish, and witness's son charged him with being drunk over night; prisoner said no, but he was not well. Weldon told them during his stay, which was not more than 14 or 15 minutes, that Mr. Freeman was lost or missing. Witness said to Weldon, he hoped Mr. Freeman was not murdered. Weldon replied, "It's well if he is not."

HENRY BROOM. sworn.

Lives at *Hambleton*. Knows the prisoners, and knew Mr. Freeman, who some times had served old Weldon with bread. Witness was the first person who found Mr. Freeman's body, on Sunday the 16th of November, about half past nine o' clock, about half a mile from *Hambleton*; it lay just within a close called the Middle Nook, about ten yards from the road from *Hambleton* to *East-*

Weldon. The body was found on the face, with the head towards the road, and the legs close together; there was a large wound on the crown of the head, and the blood lodged on the brim of his hat before. The body appeared to have been dragged on the ground, as the deceased's waistcoat and both coats were drawn up his belly, tho' all buttoned; his left hand glove was lost, the right hand one was turned down the back of the hand. Did not touch the body, but waited for some other persons coming up, who were at about 70 yards distance. By the road side, near where the body was found, witness picked up a pair of fork tines, which appeared broken short off near the hoop; these tines were delivered to the constable of *Hambleton*.

VINCENT PERCIVAL. Sworn.

He is constable of *Hambleton*. Produced the fork tines which he received at *Empingham* meeting when the prisoners were examined, and where Broom attended: produced also a fork shaft, found by him in a dike bottom, in a close near his house Nov. 19th according to Rd. Weldon's directions to Nich. Needham. Broom swore to the tines being the same that he found; were bright when he found them. Being asked what was done with Mr. Freeman's body, witness said it was removed to *Hambleton* church, and from thence to Needham's, where the jury sat on the body.

JOSEPH NEEDHAM again called.

Knew the fork shaft, which he said was once his; and he knew it by the brand; saw it in his barn on the Wednesday and Thursday morning before Mr. Freeman was murdered; did not miss it 'till Monday evening following. Found Wm. Weldon in his barn on Thursday evening before the murder, and he had no business there. Witness found him sleeping, asked what he did there, when Weldon went away.

The fork shaft, and tines which were broken off, as also the brand with which the fork shaft had been marked, were given to the jury for their inspection, and tallied exactly.

Witness said the fork was left in the open barn, that any one might see it; the door not lock'd 'till dark hour; and he never saw Weldon in the barn before the above time.

RICHARD ROBERTS, sworn.

Lives at *Hambleton*. Has known the prisoners for 14 years; saw them walking together about 8 o'clock in the morning of Friday Nov. 15th. One of them (William) made a default (*i. e.*) stopped, and the other went forward. This was about 50 or 60 yards from old Weldon's house.

JAMES THORPE, sworn.

Knows the prisoners; saw them together about twelve o'clock on Friday Nov. 15, in a garden belonging to the poor at *Hambleton*.

JOHN GUTTERIDGE, sworn.

Lives at *Embsingham*; knows the prisoners; saw Rich. Weldon at *Embsingham*, 3 miles from *Hambleton*, on Sunday morning Nov. 16th, at Mr. Collington's, getting a glass of liquor.

Mr. BERRY, Surgeon, of Oakham, sworn.

(One of the Coroners for *Rutlandshire*.)

Attended the inquest, and examined the body of the deceased Mr. Freeman. Described the wounds: the right side of the head was beat to pieces; the skull was fractured in several places, and a part of the brains beat out; there had been also a blow across the nose, by which it was cut thro'. The wounds appeared to have been given with a heavy bludgeon, and were doubtless the cause of his death.

ELIZABETH FREEMAN, sworn.

Is the widow of the deceased. Recollected her husband having on Saturday morning Nov. 16, a ten pound Bank post bill, which he had from Mr. Tomblin's man of *Edith-Weston*, and which he took with him to *Oakham* market on the above day; she saw it before he went out, and he had also two guineas in his pocket.

Mr. JOSEPH COOKE, of Edith-Weston, sworn.

He produced a Bank post bill value ten pounds, which he had from Richard Smith of *Eton*: it was dated in August, 1788. Mrs. Freeman could not positively say it was the very note her husband had.

Mr. BRAMSTON, sworn.

He had a Bank post bill the 11th of November, thinks it was dated in August, 1788. he paid it Mr. Tomblin's man, in change for a 20l. Bank bill. Was not positive as to the date or number of the bill.

JOHN BOLLAND, sworn.

Is servant to Mr. Tomblin. Proved that the bill which he received from Mr. Bramston, he delivered to his master Mr. Tomblin.

Mr. TOMBLIN, sworn.

Received the Bank bill, having been delivered to him (with 10l. cash' by his servant Bolland, the 11th of Nov. whom he sent to get cash for the same bill of Mr. Freeman, who sent by his servant seven guineas, and paid the witness the remainder that afternoon. Mr. Tomblin took no copy of the bill.

Bolland confirmed his master's testimony, with respect to delivering the bill to Mr. Freeman.

THOMAS OSBORN, sworn,

Is a wheelwright; lives at *Elton* in *Huntingdonshire*. On Tuesday morning in *Elton* feast week, one of the prisoners (Rd. Weldon) accosted him, by saying. "Good morning; I doubt you could not tell me where to change a bill." I said a bill! any one would cash a good bill. Weldon pulled out his purse, and gave into my hand a paper which he said I might look at, saying he did not much understand them. On examining, found it to be a 10l. Bank post bill. Witness took him to a Mr. Mackelefs's, a shop-keeper, to get the cash, but he was not at home; they then went to Mr. Smith's, butcher, at *Elton*, who gave Rd. Weldon nine guineas and a half and sixpence, for the bill. About half way back to Osborne's house, Weldon pulled out 6d. which he forced on the witness, saying, he did not want any person to do any thing for him for nothing. Weldon was a perfect stranger to the witness when he applied to him to get the bill exchanged.

RICHARD SMITH, sworn.

Lives at *Elton*; recollects giving cash for a ten pound Bank post bill, in the feast week, to a person brought by the former witness, Thomas Osborne, but could not swear that either of the prisoners was the man. Did not remember the number or date of the bill, but should know it again, because he had wrote his name at the back of it. Witness took the bill to *Empingham*, and received cash for it of Mr. Cooke of *Edith-Weston*.

Mr. Cooke produced a bill in court, and Smith swore to it's being the same.

THOMAS EXTON, sworn.

Is a grazier at *Hambleton*; produced a long thick stick, which he found leaning against a hedge (on the Thursday after Mr. Freeman was murdered) in a close in *Hambleton* lordship, belonging to Mr. Sherrard, of *Langham*. Mr. Exton had attended the justices' meeting at *Empingham*. (which was held for the purpose of examining the prisoners, and taking their confessions.) He asked Rd. Weldon what they had done with the stick they knocked the poor man down with? Rd. told him they threw it away near an ash tree in Mr. Sherrard's close, by which directions the witness found it. No threats or promises whatever were made use of to the prisoners, that the witness knew of, previous to their examination, or at any other time.

The close where the stick was found lies near the road from *Stamford* to *Edith-Weston*, and about a furlong from the place where Mr. Freeman's body was found, nearer *Edith-Weston*. Witness had not had the stick in his possession ever since, having given it to the deceased Mr. Lumley, but he had often seen it, and swore the one he produced was the same stick that he found.

N. NEEDHAM, again called.

He acted as assistant to take Rich. Weldon, and went with Michael Bloodworth to *Barnack*, near *Stamford*, for that purpose, but Weldon was not there. He then went to *Elton*, accompanied by Rob. Barrow, where he found him. As soon as witness saw Rd. Weldon, he said, "You

are the very men I want." Says Weldon, "Why, what's the matter?" "That's best known to yourself," replied Needham, "your brother has swore you killed Mr. Freeman." Weldon replied, "he would speak the truth if he was hanged the next minute." Witness then said no more to him, but put him into a chaise, with Barrow and himself, and came to within a mile of Stamford, in their way to Empingham. Barrow there left them, and Mr. Cooke's man supplied his place in the chaise. After this, Richard said he did not commit the murder, but his brother Will did, and he stood under an ash tree 'till his brother bro't him the money, viz. two guineas and a half crown, and a bit of fine paper, which he said he had burnt that morning about nine o' clock, not knowing what it was. On the road, near Stamford race ground, witness asked Weldon what he did with the fork shaft he had murdered Mr. Freeman with? Weldon said it lay in a close of Mr. Hippsley's, joining Mobb's close, where it was found in a dike bottom, about ten yards from the stile.

Question by the court. Was there any threats or promises made before this conversation? — *Answer.* No.

It was two o' clock in the morning before witness got home, when he found Wm. Weldon in custody at his house; witness told him he had taken his brother Richard, and said, but I doubt it's you who have done the murder; Wm. at first said, No; but afterwards confessed he did, and said he knocked him down with a pole. Witness then asked him which of them picked the deceased's pockets? He said, "I don't justly know which, but we took each hold of a leg, and drew him into a nook." He then said he had hid three guineas of Mr. Freeman's money in the lane; witness, in company with Percival and Wm. Tymson, went to search for the money, but could not find it. Wm. Weldon afterwards went with them, and it was found in Pudding bag lane, in a tuft of grass, near some wood gates, wrapped in blue paper.

VINCENT PERCIVAL, again called.

Confirmed the circumstances respecting the money being found as above, Wm. Weldon told them he had on-

ly 3 guineas of the money Mr. Freeman was robbed of.

The Rev. Mr. Foster, sworn.

Quest. Are you a magistrate for this county? — *Ans.* Yes, I am.

Q. Did you see the prisoner, Wm. Weldon, put his mark to these papers, which are signed by you? — *A.* Yes.

Q. Was any promise of favour, or threats used, to induce him to sign the papers? — *A.* None in my hearing.

Q. Did he sign them voluntarily? — *A.* He did.

Q. Were the papers read over to him first? — *A.* They were twice read over to him.

Q. Were the confessions taken in his own presence and from his own words? — *A.* They were. He repeated the words over and over again.

The examinations of Wm. Weldon were then read in court.

Wm. Weldon when examined before the magistrate at *Empingham* on Nov. 18th, denied being concerned in the murder and robbery of Freeman; but when examined on the day following, he made the following confession.

“That about 6 o’ clock in the evening of Nov. 15, he and his brother Rd. Weldon went from *Hambleton* towards *Edith-Weston*, and waited on the road for John Freeman; in about a quarter of an hour they saw him coming, and when he was opening a gate, he (Wm. Weldon) struck him with a broken pole on the head, which knocked him from his horse; Rd. Weldon then struck Freeman several times with a fork till he broke it: Wm. Weldon thought that Freeman felt nothing after the blow he gave him with the pole, for he groan’d only once, and that was as he was falling from his horse: Rd. Weldon took Freeman’s purse out of his pocket; both assisted in dragging Freeman’s body out of the high road, thro’ a gap in the hedge; and left it in the next close: they then walked together towards *Hambleton*, and examined what was in the purse, which contained 5 guineas in gold, 4s. 6d. in silver, with a few half-pence, and a piece of stamp’d paper: Wm. Weldon had 3 guineas and 2 shillings for his share, and his brother kept the remainder, with the stamp’d paper.”

THOMAS NEEDHAM again called.

Examined as to his reason for saying it was six o' clock when he was at old Weldon's house. Witness thought it was about that time, because the moon was rising; it might be earlier, or later; could not be sure, only he saw the full moon. Was sure Wm. Weldon was in the house at the time he was, but did not talk to him.

Here ended the examination of the witnesses.

The learned judge in a candid and impartial manner then summed up the evidence, and left the matter to the decision of the jury, who, after a short consultation, returned their verdict, finding **BOTH THE PRISONERS GUILTY.**

His lordship then in the most affecting manner proceeded to pass sentence on the prisoners, which drew tears from many of the spectators, but seemed to have little effect on the two unhappy men. He exhorted them in the most serious manner to make a proper use of the short time they had to live, and call upon God, whose express laws they had violated, for pardon for their sins. — Addressing himself to Richard Weldon, he expatiated on the horrid deed done in murdering Mr. Lumley, which, tho' he was not tried for, must shut him out from all mercy on earth. He concluded his speech, by informing the prisoners they were to be hanged on Monday by the neck until they were both dead, and their bodies to be afterwards delivered to the surgeons to be dissected and anatomized.

Before the judge left the town, he ordered their bodies to be hung in chains near where the murder was committed; which has since been done accordingly.

On the day before the two culprits were executed, they seemed a little sensible of their situation, and as the only atonement they could make, confessed the crimes they had committed, and what they intended committing, had they not been timely prevented by the unerring hand of providence, to the Rev. Mr. WILLIAMS of OAKHAM, whose kind and constant attendance upon them, reflects the highest honor on his profession.

The prisoners confessed their intentions to murder the following persons:

Mr. Stimson of *Hambleton*, who they laid in wait for as he came from *Uppingham*, where he had been to sell cattle.

Mr. Hippsley, of *Hambleton*, going to *Swinstead*.

Mr. Needham, of *Hambleton*, going to *Stamford* fair.

Mr. Freer, of *Hambleton*.

Mr. Rott, a taylor, of *Hambleton*.

The night before they murdered Mr. Freeman, Rd. lay in wait in Mr. Bunning's necessary, at *Kilthorpe*, several hours, with intent to murder him or his servant maid. — Assigned no reason for his attempt on Mr. Bunning, but said he had stole two shirts from him, and the maid had mentioned the loss to her mistress, which made him wish to take her life.

Richard said he stole some cloth from Mr. Butt of *Exton*, with whom he lived servant. He also confessed to several other thefts.

On the 16th of March they were executed according to their sentence. Richard appeared to be dead very soon after he was turned off, but William continued to struggle for some minutes.

They both acknowledged being guilty of the crime for which they suffered, and said the bill they robbed Mr. Freeman of, Richard got cash for of Mr. Smith of *Elton*.

AN ACCOUNT OF MR. LUMLEY'S MURDER,

COMMITTED BY

RICHARD WELDON.

ON Sunday the 8th day of Feb. about three o' clock in the afternoon, when poor Mr. Lumley, according to custom on a Sunday (at which hour the Rev. Mr. Williams was not able to attend) with that goodness of heart which attended him always, particularly to the prisoners, went to pray with them, Richard, with a stick he had taken out of a faggot given them to burn, knocked him down: immediately on which his brother Wm. asked him "what that was for?" and prevented his striking him any more; after this Richard shut his brother and Lumley up together, and fastened them in. He then went to the debtors room, and told Hill, a person confined there, "that his master Lumley wanted to speak with him in the dungeon," which as soon as Hill had entered, he also fastened him in, with Mr. Lumley and his brother, and then made towards the house. Mrs. Lumley observing him coming that way, had just time to bolt the door to prevent his entering. She then ran to a window which looked into the place where Richard was confined to seek her husband, who she saw in an erect posture against the door, which so alarmed her that she could not speak to him; she then ran into the street and called for assistance.

On her return, Richard had got into the house, and was going up stairs; the chains making a noise, discovered him, and he was soon secured by the persons who came in on Mrs. Lumley's giving the alarm. After this he was searched, and a knife found upon him, converted into a kind of saw, with which he had sawed the knob from one of his irons.

Mr. Lumley, thro' imprudent lenity, had entrusted these villains with knives to eat their victuals with; one of which they had secreted for the above purpose.

During the time Mr. Lumley was murdered, Mrs. Lumley and her mother were fortunately very still in the house, so that when Richard came into the yard she heard his chains rattle, which gave her just cause for alarm: had Rd. got into the house without being heard, he assuredly would have murdered both Mrs. Lumley and her mother. as he confessed that was his intention, if they had made the least noise, and then have robbed the house of what money he could. He also confessed that he should have murdered Hill, if he could not have shut him in the dungeon.

The murder of Mr. Lumley appears to have been premeditated for some time by Richard, and he much wanted an opportunity to inform Wm. of his diabolical design; a circumstance occurred some days before, that will fully evince this. The brothers were confined in separate apartments, William's cell being on the right side of the yard, and Richard's on the left. As Wm. was one day passing by the place where his brother was confined, he observed Rd. hold something up at the window, which he thought was Mr. Freeman's purse; but Rd. afterwards confessed that it was the stick he killed poor Lumley with, and that he meant it for a token to inform his brother of his intention. Wm. not understanding what he meant, requested John Barker, a prisoner in the same gaol, to ask his brother what he meant by holding something up at the window; but he would not inform Barker any thing about it, being, as he afterwards said, afraid to trust him.

His conduct in the above matter shews he was possessed of more cunning than he was generally thought to have, and his hiding the stick with which he killed Mr. Lumley, among some faggots, after he had committed the bloody deed, is a great proof of artfulness.

F I N I S.

Ex. J. M.
12/11/12

